GENERAL QUESTIONS ON PROGRAM AND APPLICATIONS

Please specify the role of the USDA field offices in the review process.   As applicants we are told to involve them carefully, and we are also told that "coverage" by a USDA field office is a main criterion for country selection. But then we later learn that field office involvement in proposal review is not uniform.   In some cases, field offices review only some of the proposals and in other cases they review none.
USDA field office review is an active and important factor taken into consideration during the review process for each proposal. USDA field offices provide the benefits of insights from the ground in terms of long-range planning, program fit, best practices, and strategic approaches in the context of a particular country

Are existing projects open for competition?
Yes. The solicitation process is competitive, and the incumbent organization must compete for additional funding.

During proposal development may applicants contact USDA to insure ideas are consistent with USDA key objectives and strategy and also ask questions germane to proposal development?
During the proposal development period, USDA staff will take questions. To ensure that all organizations have access to the same information, answers will be provided in a Questions and Responses document published weekly on the McGovern-Dole Program - How to Apply Web site as well as the Food for Progress Program - How to Apply Web site, adjacent to the Proposal Solicitation documents and annexes.

Are reports on the current implementing partner public?
Reports are not publicly available. Portions of the reports may be released under a Freedom of Information Act request. However, USDA could redact portions of the reports that if one of the exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act applies.

Does every country have an agricultural attaché or agricultural office?
No. When a particular country post does not have an agricultural attaché or agricultural office, another country in the vicinity is likely to host the attaché or counselor who manages agricultural affairs on a regional basis. For example, the agricultural office at the post in Nairobi, Kenya has the agricultural and food related issues of Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi under her supervision.   To determine FAS coverage, please go to: www.fas.usda.gov/ofso/overseas_post_directory/ovs_directory_search.asp
The proposal documents do not specifically mention gender or environment. These are areas that we consistently includes in our projects and I would like your guidance on whether these are priority areas for USDA as well.
The priority areas and topics are referred to within the program announcements specifically in Annex 6 (Country Specific Guidance) on the McGovern-Dole How to Apply Web site and the Food for Progress How to Apply Web site. Please refer to these documents.

Am I eligible to apply? My organization is based outside the United States.
To determine eligibility, non-U.S. organizations should check the criteria in 7 CFR section 1499.3 or 7 CFR section 1599.3. Non-U.S. organizations should pay particular attention to the listed requirement for a U.S.-based agent or office that will represent them in the event of judicial or legal proceedings.

We are considering a proposal in consortium with two other organizations. Does FAS have any preferences/criteria regarding which is designated the prime organization?
The designation of the prime grantee is at the discretion of the applicants. Please note that other organizations helping to implement the project will need to be designated as sub-recipients.

Are there minimum requirements in terms of expertise, experience, and/or education that USDA expects for the position of Country Director/Chief of Party?
The Chief of Party should have experience in management, the implementation of grants, and delivery of food assistance. The Chief of Party should also, where possible, demonstrate an understanding of operational context with respect to the country in which programs are being implemented. USDA has not specified standards, but based on past competitive funding awards, most Chiefs of Party have a college degree related to grants or development and several years of experience in managing human and financial resources, implementing grants, and delivering of food assistance.

Are applications that propose projects in more than one country allowable, and if they are should we submit separate applications for each country or one joint application?
Multi-country proposals are acceptable. To be considered along with proposals in priority countries, all of the countries listed in the proposal would have to be on the priority list. A single application for both countries is acceptable.
How would a proposal involving a mix of both priority and non-priority countries be evaluated?
If a multi-country proposal includes both priority and non-priority countries, the proposal must demonstrate a strong regional development approach and focus on the program's priority sectors for development assistance.

Can we include other regions besides the priority regions (within the same country) listed on the solicitation announcement?
Applicants may include projects in regions other than the priority regions within the same country, but applicants must justify why these other non-priority regions are selected for projects.

If a PVO is not currently working in a country, but its sub-recipient is, can they still apply for a proposal for that country?
Any organization may apply whether or not they have experience in-country, but USDA wants to ensure that the applicant or sub-recipients have experience within the country. Organizations that demonstrate experience in the country will score higher on this factor than those that rely solely on the experience of the sub-recipient.   If a proposed sub-recipient has experience in the country, the proposal should detail this. Review the proposal evaluation criteria in the solicitation (for the McGovern-Dole Program or for the Food for Progress Program). USDA will review the ability to obtain registration within the country.

It seems average size of grants has increased? Is this correct?
During FY 2011 and FY 2012, the average size of the grants increased slightly but remained near the $15-million level. Rising commodity and freight costs contributed to the increase. The selection of commodities needed for the specific projects also affected total costs.

Given the interval between the date of the award and the date of the project's start, how do you want us to deal with the issue of potential changes in key personnel (i.e., Chief of Party/Country Director)?
USDA understands that the Chief of Party listed in the proposal may change during the proposal evaluation period and during the negotiation of the grant agreement. The applicant should alert USDA and provide a new Curriculum Vitae (CV) if a change occurs.

In terms of Monitoring and Evaluation, what would you advise organizations that must report on the approximately 80,000 students in their program purview?
Information on project accomplishments must be reported on a school-by-school basis.

Are applicants required to name in the proposal the specific third party entity that will carry out the mid-term and final evaluations?
No.

Another organization has contacted us to request a meeting regarding their application. Could you please advise if there are any restrictions on meetings between our organization and or other potential bidders?
USDA places no restrictions on meetings arranged between potential applicants.

If we are presenting a proposal as a consortium, with a prime and a sub-awardee, do we need to attach PPRs only from the prime, a combination of prime and sub (total 5), or 5 from each partner?
USDA is not accepting consortium proposals with multiple prime applicants at this time. A prime applicant must be designated and others must be designated as sub-recipients. A proposal must be submitted by the organization which plans to lead the execution of the project. The participation of the other organizations must take place through a sub recipient agreement. Sub-recipients need not complete the Past Performance Records. Only the prime applicant must provide the Past Performance Record.

APPLICATION (MECHANICS AND SUBMISSION)

Regarding the SF 424 form, box #14 asks for to "list the applicant's congressional districts and any districts affected by the program or project". Can you please clarify what the congressional district refers to?
For #14, the Congressional District of the applicant is the district in which the organization is registered, and the Congressional District of the Project is "not applicable."

Regarding the SF 424 form, box #16 states that "Applicants should contact the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for Federal Executive Order 12372 to determine whether the application is subject to the State intergovernmental review process." Can you please clarify who the relevant SPOC is and provide contact information?
The SF 424 form was prepared to accommodate multiple programs. Box #16 is not applicable to the McGovern-Dole and Food for Progress programs.

In the Past Performance Reports template section on reference contact information, what is the difference between technical officer and contracting/agreement officer?
A technical officer refers to the staff person who has served as the lead on program implementation and must be able to comment on the substance of your food aid-related project's conceptual approach, strategy, and execution. A contracting/agreement officer refers to the staff person in charge of grant rules and contract management including financial agreements and obligations. The contracting/agreement officer must be able to comment on your grant process management capabilities.

Are Letters of Support allowed for the Applicant only or are they allowed for the Applicant's partners?
Letters of support are allowed only for the applicants.

Do proposals need to be for 3 years?
The applicant can choose the term of the proposal. Most proposals cover 3 years. However, proposals may be submitted for up to a five-year duration.

The review criteria mention that FAS will check whether the applicant is registered or has a plan to become registered in the country of operation. We intend to start the registration process in Senegal shortly (having already confirmed documentation requirements with the relevant ministries). In this context, could you please clarify if our organization would be eligible for funding?
If the applicant does not offer documentation demonstrating in country registration, they must offer documentation showing a detailed plan to become registered.

The Food Aid Proposal Guidance states that the Project Level Frameworks are to be attached, however is it true that the FAIS system now creates RF internally? Can you clarify?
All applicants are required to attach a project-level results framework (RF) to the Proposal Summary section of their application. Please remember that all attachments must be submitted in PDF format.

What's the recommended length and format for the Strategic Analysis/Introduction section?
The Strategic Analysis should be incorporated into the Introduction section. USDA has not specified a length, but 15 pages would normally be sufficient. The Introduction section will now be put into a Food Aid Information System (FAIS) field. Plan to provide the equivalent of 15 pages single-spaced in a 12-point font for the Introduction.

Is a separate Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) document required?
Yes. The PMP must be attached to the proposal packet within the FAIS as a separate file (PDF). The PMP shows definitions of indicators, how the indicator information will be collected, and ensures that indicators used in measuring one program are standardized across all programs.

With respect to the Food for Progress (FFPr) Results Framework, is it acceptable for a FFPr project to address only one Strategic Objective (SO) if the targeted focus and need is clearly justified in the Intro/Strategic Analysis, or must all proposed projects target both Strategic Objective 1 and Strategic Objective 2? If it is acceptable to target only one SO, might the proposal be viewed less favorably?
When constructing a project-level results framework (RF), applicants should include all activities and results that the proposed project will address. Projects are not required to reach every result in the program-level Results Framework.

Can PVO's include pictures and graphs as part of their application?
Yes, an organization may include pictures or graphs as a generic PDF attachment. The visuals should be kept to a minimum and only be submitted if they are relevant and pertinent to the proposed project .

Regarding the Past Performance information, is there a page limit for each one?
Applicants should only complete Part I of the Past Performance Record Template. While there is no page limit specified, USDA expects that it would not take more than a page to complete the necessary reference summaries required in Part I.

Regarding the letters of support, it would be helpful to know who these letters should be from (i.e. current/previous partners or donors) and if there is a specific format to be followed.
Letters of support are not required but may be included at the applicant's discretion. Letters of support may be from previous or current donors or partners who can testify as to the applicant's ability to successfully implement food aid programs in an international context. An applicant should consider the scope of the project when determining who would be appropriate in providing letters of support for the proposed project.

Please advise as to whether sub-grantees must also complete the SF 424, AD 3030 and Past Performance, or if only the prime organization must complete these forms.
Sub-grantees need not complete the SF-424, AD-3030 and Past Performance Records. Only the prime applicant must provide these documents.

What is the page limit for the M&E Plan and the PMP?
The page limit for the M&E Plan is 10 pages. There is no limit for the PMP.
With regard to the definition of terms on the PMP, when a key term, for example— teacher—appears in several indicators, are we required to define it every time it is used or does one definition suffice?
A one-time definition of a key term is sufficient.

Is there a limit to the number of files that can be uploaded under the 'generic' drop down listing for proposal submission?
There is no limit on number of files that can be uploaded under generic, but applicants should only submit documentation relevant and pertinent to the proposed project. All uploaded files must be in PDF.

Can we upload maps of targeted geographic areas as well as an organizational (management) chart for the project under the generic tab?
Yes, an organization can upload maps of targeted geographic areas as well as an organizational (management) chart for the project. Again, all uploaded files must be submitted in PDF format.

What is the "Activity Order" field in the Activities section for? There is no guidance provided on this item. (Also: In the Activity tab when creating new activities, the form asks for Activity Order. Please explain.)
The "Activity Order" field allows applicants to apply a sequential order to the activities displayed in the final proposal. So for activities to be conducted in a graduated time frame, the first activity in the sequence, applicants should put "1" in the activity order field, for the second activity applicants should designate "2," and so on. If the field is left blank, FAIS automatically populates it with "0."

BUDGET

The food aid information system (FAIS) simply has a box to enter narrative text and there is no guidance as to desired length or level of detail. It is our understanding that the budget narrative should address the major budget line items, within that detailing justification for the items and how costs were calculated. Could you please clarify the level of detail required for "how each budget line item is required to achieve the results of the proposed project"?
The budget narrative should provide clarity and transparency on the items listed in the budget in terms of their use in activities, programs, and supporting requirements to achieve the results of the proposed project. Reviewers must be able to cross-reference the budget item with the budget narrative to see the purpose of the listed expenditure in the proposed project. Budget narratives must (1) not exceed the maximum character limit specified in FAIS and (2) address all criteria noted in the guidance for preparing a budget narrative in the FY2015 Proposal Guidance document.

Is there a place on your website where applicants can see the budget amounts (total cash amounts for administrative expenses, ITSH, and activities) for current MGD agreements?
The FAS online-listing of active McGovern-Dole Programs contains only the total value of each agreement. This does not itemize the cash value of commodity, freight, and cash provided for administrative expenses, internal transportation, storage and handling (ITSH), and activities.

What percent of the overall cost for agreements goes towards cash funding?
Historically on average, 40 percent of the overall cost of agreements is for commodities; 30–40 percent is for transportation; and, 20–30 percent is for administrative, ITSH, and activity costs.

It is clear that the entire application package must be submitted electronically through the proposal entry module FAIS; however, could you confirm if an input excel file will again be the method for submitting cost data.
Applicants may choose to enter budget information line-by-line in FAIS or to upload multiple lines in an Excel spreadsheet. For specific details of how to submit the budget, please review Section 7 in the Annex V: Food Aid Proposal Entry Instructions document. The required Excel file is the Budget Template (.xls) file provided on the Food Aid Web sites.
Food for Progress Program: http://www.fas.usda.gov/excredits/FoodAid/FFP/ApplyForProgram.asp or McGovern-Dole Food for Education Program
http://www.fas.usda.gov/excredits/FoodAid/FFE/ApplyForProgram.asp

Is it expected that 100% of the budget should derive from monetization proceeds?
Under Food for Progress, all of the funding for activities and internal storage, transportation, and handling must come from monetization proceeds. Commodity Credit Corporation funding or monetization proceeds can be used to cover administrative expenses. Under the McGovern-Dole program, USDA funding is available to cover administrative, internal transportation, storage and handling, and activity costs. Applicants that propose to monetize commodities under McGovern-Dole must justify why monetization would provide a greater benefit than the receipt of USDA-provided funds to carry out activities.

In past years, applicants entered the year of application (FY2015) for expenses regardless of implementation year. Is this still the case? For example, the full cost of a Chief of Party hired for 4 years would fall under 2015, not 1 year each under 2016, 2017, etc.

The applicant has flexibility in entering the budget information. The applicant can choose to group expenses and place the cumulative expenses into one year, or the applicant can enter expense for each specific year. The critical point is to provide sufficient details and comments to allow the proposal reviewer to understand how the funding would be spent on these expenses.

In FAIS, applicants upload number of units, but not the type of unit, for each budget line item. In the past, the COP has been represented by "1" because there is 1 proposed COP. Would it be acceptable to use days or months (even years) for LOE, and months for other operational costs if the type of unit is included in the description of the item? For example, instead of calling the line "COP" and the unit "1", the line could be called "Days of COP LOE" and the units would be "1,040".

Applicants have flexibility in entering different types of units, because the unit types may be defined in the comment field. (The comment field may also be used to explain the line item in greater detail.) For items such as travel and equipment, USDA prefers to know the number of trips and the number of pieces of equipment. In the case of personnel such as a Chief of Party, both the number of people and the level of effort/percentage of time on the project are relevant budget entries. For example, if a single COP is spending 40 percent of their time on the project, then the entry would be 1 unit and 40 percent COP LOE. Or, if the COP is spending 1,040 working days on the project, then the entry would be 1 unit and 1,040 days of COP LOE.

Will our sub-recipient budget need to be integrated into the line item budget or can we create one line item for the partner budget since we will be providing a detail narrative? If yes, how should we separate their admin cost from WV or should it all be integrated as well?

A sub-recipient budget line item may be inserted under Professional Services. You can include a brief description. However in the budget narrative, provide detailed information on how funds provided to the sub-recipient will be allocated, including sub-recipient administrative expenses. This is distinct from the prime applicant's administrative expenses which should also be noted (separately) in the budget narrative.

Is there a limit to the dollar value of the proposal?

No, USDA does not specify a limit to the dollar value of a proposal. Annual programmatic budgets are taken into consideration when considering proposals.

The solicitation references a budget narrative. The budget template included with the solicitation contains only an Excel file with the budget format to be uploaded to FAIS. The proposal guidance says, "Provide a thorough budget narrative. This description should account for all costs that are included in the line item." Kindly confirm that the budget narrative is to be entered in the upload with the Excel file, and is not a separate document. Kindly also confirm the character limit per line item budget narrative.

All proposals require a budget narrative that is separate from the Excel file showing line items. The budget narrative is to be completed in the "PVO Budget" section in FAIS. To enter this information, click on the Budget Narrative Tab. The budget justification should be entered in the yellow box under the

Budget Narrative tab. Guidance on how to write the budget narrative is provided in the FY15 Food Aid Proposal Guidance.

Within the detailed budget, should ocean transportation be included?
No. Ocean transportation costs are estimated in another section of FAIS. Applicants should not include ocean transportation costs in their budgets. Applicants will need to include internal transportation, storage and handling costs in their budgets (under ITSH).

How detailed must the budget be?
The budget should provide sufficient detail for a reviewer to understand the uses/cost categories to which the budget will be allocated. A transparent budget makes it easy for the reviewer to evaluate how the project will be executed. While it is acceptable to use generic terms like "Supplies" to avoid listing the minutiae of individual items, including a description of the cost category will provide transparency into how grant money will be spent. Line items for large budget items, such as personnel, travel, equipment, and professional expenses should provide enough details to allow the reviewer to identify the number of people or items and costs per unit and determine the reasonableness of these costs.

This year FAIS is not accepting non-numerical values (i.e. TBD). Does FAS expect applicants to provide baseline numbers at the proposal stage?
The applicant should provide baseline estimates to the extent possible. If no baseline is available, an entry of zero (0) is acceptable. However, if an applicant is submitting a proposal to enhance or continue a previously funded project, baseline estimates are expected.

What is the expected overall length of proposals for FFP and FFE?
USDA has not specified a length in the solicitation. Applicants should adequately describe their proposed project and address the evaluation criteria listed in the proposal announcements.

Can USDA provide guidance on how many Results and Activities within each of the Strategic Objectives that implementers should propose?
A robust proposal should strive to meet multiple subsidiary level results to achieve the highest level strategic objectives (SO) of the Food for Progress results framework or the McGovern-Dole results framework. While the proposal guidelines do not prescribe a number of results or activities, proposals should convey sufficient activities that would achieve multiple subsidiary level results. The applicant must also link activities directly to results.

Please clarify what portion of funding is reserved for World Food Program (WFP) projects.
No funds are reserved nor special weighting given to proposals from any category of applicant. Funding awards are based on the evaluation criteria laid out in the Proposal Guidance documents. WFP projects have not received Food for Progress funding recently. Over the past five years, WFP may have received up to 40–50 percent of total funding, while other organizations may have received 50–60 percent of the funding. This long-term historical estimate includes unusual funding spikes such as the FY 2013 funding cycle when several existing WFP projects required funding replenishment.

Commodities

What is the future of FFP and FFE given proposed reforms within the USG for food aid? Will approved programs in fact be funded? And what about commodity being shipped in out years in FFE? Will that be funded too?
The first question extends beyond the scope of the solicitation for proposals and cannot be addressed at this time. We expect that any FFP or McGovern-Dole grant agreements will operate until the end of the grant agreement.

Our organization's policy is not to engage in open market monetization projects. So could you please inform us whether the inclusion of monetization for the Food for Progress program (CFDA 10.606) is a mandatory component of this proposal?
The applicant can choose whether to monetize, distribute the food directly, or use another approach. Regardless of the method, the proposal must contribute to the intended results of the program.

Where is the current CCC listing of commodities available for monetization?
Information on the solicitation of bids and award of contracts for various commodities under domestic and foreign food assistance programs administered by the Kansas City Commodity Office (KCCO, may be found at: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=coop&topic=pas-ex
The listing of commodities and requirements for the commodity being procured may be found at: http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/webapp?area=home&subject=coop&topic=pas-ex-cr

Are there any commodities especially attractive or unattractive to USDA?
USDA will consider all commodities that can be purchased competitively in the United Sates, are appropriate for the recipient country market, will not disrupt commercial sales or local production, meet the needs of recipients, and are cost effective. Commodity operations statistics for previous years including International Program Purchases may be found on the FSA Commodity Operations Web site.
For commodities used for school feeding under the McGovern-Dole program, an applicant should take into consideration (1) the nutritional value of the commodity mix, (2) acceptability and suitability of the commodity or commodities in the recipient country, (3) ease of preparation, and (4) the availability of the commodity in the United States.   For commodities to be used for monetization, the applicant should consider (1) the availability of the commodity in the United States, (2) the potential market for monetizing the commodity in the recipient country, (3) the impact of monetization on any local production or commercial imports of the commodity, and (4) the cost recovery price.

Regions of Operation

How were new regions of interest (priority regions) chosen?
The process of choosing priority regions included consultations with FAS overseas staff and country teams within the U.S. embassies. Priorities for the Feed the Future Initiative and country investment plans were also considered.

If applying for follow-on funding, are you requiring PVOs to restrict their proposed projects to priority areas? How do you recommend a PVO proceed if they wish to focus on a non-priority region?
Priority areas are weighted heavily and applicants must make a strong analytical case to conduct activities in a non-priority region. The analysis must be based on the programmatic strategic goals of

the two programs. Applications for projects in non-priority regions will be evaluated among all other proposals. Few projects in non-priority countries or regions have been funded.

McGovern-Dole Program

How many McGovern-Dole program agreements does FAS approve each year?
FAS usually approves about 10 agreements, but this can vary depending on the size of each agreement, the appropriation amount, and the amount of carryover funding available.

I am interested in applying to a country not included in the Annex 6, Country Specific Guidance in the McGovern-Dole program announcement, Indonesia is not included as a priority country. Can I still apply?
Priority areas are weighted heavily and applicants must make a strong analytical case to conduct activities in a non-priority region. The analysis must be based on the programmatic strategic goals of the McGovern-Dole program. Applications for projects in non-priority regions will be evaluated among all other proposals. Few projects in non-priority countries or regions have been funded.

Is WFP required to submit past performance reports? Is there some guidance on this for them if they are required to do so?
Yes, all organizations need to provide past performance reports. Guidance on Past Performance Records may be found on page 18 of the Proposal Guidance.

Kenya is not on your list. Can an organization from a country other than those on the list apply for McGovern-Dole Program funds?
The list of priority countries and regions is not intended to limit Private Voluntary Organization (PVOs) or organizations based in any country from applying for funding; however, based on past experience, proposals in priority countries are more likely to be funded.
The Farm Bill has provisions for local/regional purchases of commodities associated with McGovern-Dole programs. Should organizations applying for Program funds include local/regional purchases of commodities?
If FAS receives authority in the Farm Bill for local and regional purchases by August 2nd 2013, then applicants could include a provisional activity for local and regional purchase of commodities in the McGovern-Dole proposal.

Which sections of the USDA Food Aid Proposal Guidance should be included in the Introduction? Where in the Guidance does it mention a page-limit? (McGovern-Dole)
The introduction must include all 11 elements listed on pages 23–25 of the Food Aid Proposal Guidance. USDA has not specified a maximum length for the introduction, but 15 pages would normally be sufficient.

The literacy results framework speaks of three target areas: Literacy, Attendance and Enrollment. Are all three considered equal in value or are they prioritized and if so, in what order? In other words when improved literacy is mentioned are you implying that we should focus first on reading/comprehension and not as much on increasing enrollment and attendance? Could there be a contradiction in that higher literacy indicates a quality indicator while attendance and enrollment point towards access? They are interdependent but different, one leads to the next.
Improved Literacy of School-Age Children is the main highest level intended result of the McGovern-Dole program as outlined in the McGovern-Dole Program's results framework. Improved Student Attendance is one of the three secondary results that lead to this objective. Increased Student Enrollment is one of the lower-level results that lead to Improved Student Attendance. There is no contradiction between the intended results of Improved Literacy and Improved Attendance and Increased Enrollment. These results are interdependent. The McGovern-Dole program seeks an increase in children enrolling in and attending school, but emphasizes that their time at school results in solid improvements in their literacy and educational attainment.

Is USDA/FAS interested in using EGRA-type evaluation to measure improved literacy or broader tests that measure other areas (not just reading)?
Yes, FAS is interested in using EGRA or other similar evaluations typically used to measure literacy. While the program primarily emphasizes improvement in literacy, it should also contribute to improvements in students' test scores in other areas.

What does "financial account" mean in the McGovern-Dole Announcement, page 5?
Financial account refers to a bank account in the country of operation of the proposed project.

Given the time constraint (3-year projects) in very challenging conditions, could USDA/FAS provide illustrative actions that could address improved literacy and improve health effectively?
Since McGovern-Dole agreements are generally only three years in length, we understand that a project may not be able to achieve the highest level objectives within the timeframe of the funded project (e.g., 100 percent improved literacy of school-age children). Proposals must include a timeline noting the achievement of specific milestones including those that exceed three years (such as the previously noted literacy of the targeted population). The McGovern-Dole Program Results framework on Improved Literacy includes lower-level results that are expected to be accomplished within a 3-year period. For example, an activity such as teacher training in reading instruction should lead to 'Increased Skills and Knowledge of Teachers.' Other activities that can be accomplished within a 3-year period include providing books or establishing reading clubs (which lead to 'Improved Literacy Instructional Materials'). Similarly, under the Program's Results framework on Increased Use of Health and Dietary Practices, there are activities that could lead to intermediate or lower level results if a 3-year timeline is too short to achieve the highest-level objective. For example, activities such as providing de-worming medicine or mosquito nets should lead to 'Increased Access to Preventative Health Interventions.'

The announcement states applicants should focus on sustainability, which is a longer term effort involving local staff and institutions. Will USDA/FAS look favorably on prioritizing local capacity building while working on the delivery of technical assistance and commodities to reach beneficiaries and achieve the expected results?
Improvements in literacy and health and nutrition practices resulting from McGovern-Dole funding should continue after funding ends. Continuation of these improvements would normally involve a handover to the national government, local or regional government, or another entity within the

country. USDA would like grantees to build the capacity of government institutions and organizations within the recipient country so that the project will become sustainable once McGovern-Dole funding ends. That may involve working with the national or regional government, the local communities through organizations like PTAs, or a combination of both approaches.

Is it better to have a smaller or larger project? (McGovern-Dole Program)
FAS is most concerned with the quality of the proposals and planned results. Proposals should strive to meet the program's strategic objective of Improved Literacy of School-Aged Children as laid out in the McGovern-Dole Program Results Framework.

What are the criteria for selecting a new project in a country with existing programming (McGovern-Dole)?
The distinction between the evaluation of new projects and continuing projects is clear. If a new project is proposed, the same proposal quality evaluation criteria apply as for continuing projects (as outlined in the FY15 Food Aid Proposal Guidance); however, applicants must demonstrate that their new projects do not overlap, and avoid redundancy, with existing projects. This may mean including new regions and different project activities, as appropriate, to achieve the highest level strategic objectives of Improved Literacy of School-Aged Children and Increased Use of Health and Dietary Practices.

If a proposal continues an existing project, the evaluation criteria will consider the past performance of the existing program, whether the incumbent has made adequate progress in light of operational circumstances, and assess the capabilities of new organizations to add value such as strong relationships with stakeholders and government agencies in country to help the project succeed. The proposals must demonstrate how the project will build and expand upon the existing program.

What is the average award for the McGovern-Dole Program?
The average award for a 3-year project would be $10-15 million.

Am I eligible to apply? (McGovern-Dole)
Any organization applying for funding under the McGovern-Dole Program should refer to the eligibility determination criteria laid out in 7 CFR section 1599.3 (Eligibility Determination). An organization's experience in implementing food assistance programs through a variety of targeted activities designed to achieve the strategic objectives of the McGovern-Dole Program is crucial. Organizations should consider whether their proposals will be competitive under the evaluation criteria for proposals set forth explicitly in the McGovern-Dole Program FY15 Opportunity Announcement (CFDA 10.068) (See Section V Application Review Information). Proposals should also demonstrate that their projects will make substantial contributions to the highest level objectives of the McGovern-Dole Program as laid out in the McGovern-Dole Program Results Framework.

Will other organizations (other than incumbent) be seriously considered for existing programs? Is it worthwhile for other organizations to go through the resource-intensive exercise of preparing a good proposal to apply for existing programs? (McGovern-Dole)
FAS seeks the best proposals that incorporate the McGovern-Dole Program's literacy objectives. Applicants may be competing against an incumbent in a particular country or region. The incumbent organization must compete for additional funding with other organizations that submit proposals. While the incumbent may have an advantage in some areas, it could fall short in others. Each organization will have to weigh its strengths and proposed projects against the evaluation factors to determine if it would be competitive.

If a proposal is submitted for an existing program, does it have to cover all the schools covered under the existing program? (McGovern-Dole)
Yes, to the extent possible. Proposals are encouraged to build on and expand the foundation of existing programs (and therefore target the same regions and schools.)

Does the proposal need to include all the schools/regions as the current project, or would you approve two or more proposals, each one covering some of these schools? (McGovern-Dole)
It is possible that USDA would approve more than one proposal, as long as the total schools/regions would be covered. The final award decision will be determined by the evaluation of each proposal and whether funding is available to support more than one proposal.

Are applicants required to target the same age group as incumbent programs have done? (E.g. if an existing program targeted pre-school to 4th grade and a new program targeted 1st to 6th grades, would this be a disadvantage for the new program applying for funding?) (McGovern-Dole)
Maintaining consistency in the operation and targeting of the feeding operation often contributes to the Strategic Objective of "Improved Literacy of School Age Children." Changes in targeted age groups will be considered only if they demonstrate careful consideration of how the changes can build on and deliver additional results. The evaluation of a proposal would be negatively affected if changes in targeted age groups are not tied to additional results or would diminish the likelihood of a graduated program.

Food for Progress Program

If the priority sector description for a particular country conflicts with existing programming is it a greater priority for USDA to build upon gains already made in the past or to address the priority sectors listed in the country chart? (Food for Progress)
The extent to which organizations address the priority countries, regions, and sector descriptions listed in the Food for Progress Opportunity Announcement CFDA Number 10.606 is an overriding consideration in evaluating proposals for funding.

In the project-level results framework in our proposal, we believe that our project design necessitates connecting results differently than suggested by the arrows in FFPr's program-level results framework. Should we consider the framework's arrows as prescription to be taken literally?
Applicants should use the arrows in the Food for Progress Program results framework as a guide rather than a prescription to inform the design of their project-level results framework. Applicants should feel free to customize the framework to fit the proposed project but should explain the customization in their strategic analysis.

The solicitation states that Food for Progress projects are expected to last 3–5 years. Is there a preference for 5-year projects now, marking a shift from previous timelines?
USDA expects that Food for Progress projects will take 3–5 years of implementation. There is no preferred time span in that range, for example, 5-year projects are not automatically favored over 3-year projects. The critical aspect is that the length of the program must be consistent with the expected accomplishments, the achievement of results following the Food for Progress Program's strategic goals, and the circumstances of operation of each project.

Am I eligible to apply? (Food for Progress)
Any organization considering applying for funding under the Food for Progress Program should carefully refer to the eligibility determination criteria laid out in 7 CFR section 1499.3 - Eligibility requirements for Cooperating Sponsor. An organization's experience in implementing food assistance programs through a variety of targeted activities designed to achieve the strategic objectives of the program is a crucial eligibility determinant. Organizations should consider whether their projects will be competitive under the evaluation criteria for proposals set forth explicitly in the Food for Progress Program FY15 Opportunity Announcement (CFDA 10.606) . Organizations should also be prepared to demonstrate in their proposals that their projects will make substantial contributions to the highest level objectives of the Food for Progress Program as laid out in the Food for Progress Program Results Framework (Annex I of the Proposal Guidance FY15).

Would the Food for Progress Program be open to programs directed towards building technology transfer and/or intellectual property management capacity and capability in developing countries, e.g., in African public sector agricultural universities and/or research institutions?
The Food for Progress Program is seeking proposals that focus on expanding markets and the trade potential of agricultural products, with an emphasis on value chains. In order to be competitive, a proposal must demonstrate how it would make substantial contributions to the highest level objectives laid out in the Food for Progress Program results framework. A proposal such as you described must include activities that achieve the strategic objective of increasing the commercial productivity and value chain of agricultural production.

Currently our factory provides direct full-time jobs to 500 Beninese and we buy from approximately 15,000 cashew farmers in the north of Benin. We feel we could be a potential candidate to this solicitation and would like to apply. I wanted to make sure we would even be eligible as a potential recipient before we worked on this proposal.
Any organization considering applying for funding under the Food for Progress Program should carefully refer to the eligibility determination criteria laid out in 7 CFR section 1499.3 - Eligibility requirements for Cooperating Sponsor. An organization's experience in implementing food assistance programs through a variety of targeted activities designed to achieve the strategic objectives of the program is a crucial eligibility determinant. Organizations are encouraged to carefully consider whether the projects they are proposing will be competitive under the evaluation criteria for proposals set forth explicitly in the Food for Progress Program FY15 Opportunity Announcement (CFDA 10.606) (See Section V Application Review Information). Organizations should also be prepared to demonstrate in their proposals that their projects will make substantial contributions to the highest level objectives of the Food for Progress Program as laid out in the Food for Progress Program Results Framework (Annex I of the Proposal Guidance FY15). Non-U.S. organizations must pay particular attention to the listed requirement for a U.S.-based agent or office that will represent them in the event of judicial or legal proceedings.